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ABSTRACT

While assessing students' needs for a new approach to the issue of plagiarism, it is interesting to note that historically attitudes towards plagiarism have not always been negative. The problem of plagiarism may really be the problem of finding a proper mix between the ideas of the speaker and the ideas of those that have preceded the speaker. Linguistic devices for carrying out this task are available. What is needed for an acceptable quotation is that the words as well as the ideas used be suitably memorable. Shirley Brice Heath has recently written on ways in which we can get students to be ethnographers of their own language, empowering students by having them become the ones who find the problems with their language and the ones who reach an accommodation with the structures of the language. Teachers should try to get their students to make such observations concerning plagiarism and originality within the discourse communities of which they are a part and to reach some sort of accommodation with their own words and ideas and those of others. (Sixteen footnotes are included and a table of contents is attached.) (RAE)

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Teaching Plagiarism

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Analyzing the Language of Change

0.1 Introduction

In looking at the question of plagiarism we are forced to confront an array of questions concerning the nature of originality in writing. Think of plagiarism as the flip side of originality. I started looking at the pronouncements we give our students; for example:

Statement of Plagiarism from the Humanities Department at Robert Morris College:

> Plagiarism is the act of taking the ideas or writings of another and passing them off as one's own

Is it likely or reasonable that our students are in the position, when learning rules of documentation, to evaluate what ideas are their own and what those of others? Can they even distinguish themselves from others? It's not an easy question.

The entire plagiarism question was making me uncomfortable - not the plagiarism of the intentional plagiarist, but of the unintentional plagiarist. The interesting problems were not being presented to my students, problems that got to the heart of what plagiarism is:

- matters of understanding the nature of originality and of having a little of it
- interest in borrowing from the ideas and words of the past
- concerns about the nature of cooperative work within complex organizations where you're never quite sure who is the author of what
- interests in learning to speak the complex languages of the discourse communities students will become a part of.

All these questions could be ignored, it seemed to me, while at the same time doing a fairly standard series of exercises on standards of documentation, how to paraphrase, use of quotation etc.

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Imagine a student whom we have correctly taught to be cautious with the words and ideas of others. Not wishing to misrepresent others, they err on the side of caution, peppering their papers with successful footnotes, citations, and documentation to produce sentences of the following sort:

Smith notes: "The resurgence of this dialectical approach is to be welcomed."

Well, fine, but by putting the material in quotation marks, the student is permitting it to be opaque to analysis. Would it not perhaps be better for students to be a bit sloppy, not worrying about whether all words are correctly quoted, but perhaps worrying a bit more about whether they could come up with an interesting thing to say. If maybe they could twist the ideas just a little to come up with something even more interesting.

About this time, I also started considering the needs of my students for standards of documentation. Would my students go on in their college careers and afterwards to engage in serious academic research? No.

So what sorts of plagiarism questions would they confront in their use of language? Let me give you a typical example. Brian works in a congressman's office. He churns out letters to irate constituents, and the congressman signs his name to them. Brian is worried about who is responsible for what in this office. And will he get canned for a foul up. He's worried about the flow of information through this office. Two months ago an irate voter was in the office, gun in hand, peeved off over something or other. Brian thinks, "The next fellow is going to come in here because of a letter I've written. But am I responsible for the letter or is the congressman?"

I'm wondering what the plagiarism question should be for such students and to make sense of that I'm wondering

1. what the varying attitudes towards plagiarism have been in disparate communities

2. what the linguistic cues of citation show us about plagiarism in our own community

3. what sorts of exercises and writing assignments will get our students to understand the nature of plagiarism, and similar concerns of originality, ownership of ideas, authorship

I'll comment a little on each of these matters.

0.2 Historical Perspectives

While I was trying to assess my students' needs for a new approach (an approach, maybe it's not new) to the plagiarism question, I was at the same time discovering fairly diverse attitudes towards originality across times and cultures. Let me offer just a few examples:

Among the Attic orators there was a very different attitude towards plagiarism. R.C. Jebb has suggested that plagiarism was an accepted practice among the Attic orators. Rather than thinking of themselves as appropriating the words of another speaker, the Attic orators assumed that once a thought was perfectly expressed it became "a morsel of the world's wealth of beauty."[1]

A second attitude towards the language of originality comes from a quite different discourse community, that of the rabbis and Talmudic scholars within the Jewish tradition.[2] Steinsaltz has remarked on the rabbis lack of interest in originality, at least the sort of unmitigated originality we often seem to encourage today. "The predilection of the great scholars throughout the centuries for seeking similarities between their theories and those of other scholars is expressed by the saying: 'Blessed is He that I have expressed the same view as the great scholars.'"

This phenomenon where one has an original idea that has already been had by others hundreds of times before is apparently quite common (and within the tradition, as I understand it, quite admirable). Steinsaltz then suggests that "innovation and substantiation are therefore complementary rather than conflicting and each scholar tries, in his own way, to arrive at 'Torah from Sinai.'"

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1. R.C. Jebb, *The Attic Orators*, 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1893, I, lxx in David S. Kaufer, "Point of View in Rhetorical Situations: Classical and Romantic Contrasts and Contemporary Implications," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 65(1979), 171-86.

2. Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud* transl. by Chaya Galai. New York: Basic Book, Inc. 1976. 265

0.2.1 Attitudes Today

But it's not just when we start looking at (possibly) foreign cultures that we see varying attitudes towards originality, borrowing, plagiarism etc. Such varying attitudes also confront us within the academic discourse community. Let me mention two:

Firstly, recent literary criticism, especially deconstruction, absolutely delights, (or wallows if you prefer that characterization) in plagiarism.[3] Raymond Federman argues that literature and art in general must be viewed as plagiarism, as does Jacques Ehrmann [574] who argues that texts can not belong to authors, as it is language that creates author and not vice versa. Some of you may recall, Borges' "Pierre Menard-Author of the Quixote"[4] in which Menard attempts to "reach the Quixote."

Not wishing to be outdone, Harold Bloom has offered practical pointers for plagiarizing. "Only great writers should be plagiarized.[5] To copy second-rate authors indeed is immoral."

He then goes on to suggest, "Misquotation, when performed by a creative critic, can be a vital mode of interpretation."

One wonders whether our students can be placed in the role of creative critic.

To the credit of the deconstructionists, they are one group I have come across that take the problem of quotation and misquotation seriously. Thus, Derrida has argued in a rather obscure commentary on the works of the natural language philosopher Austin that what is needed in literary theory is a "differential typology of forms of iteration," [192], a typology where there is not a clear and absolute distinction between citational language on the one hand, and first person

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3. Raymond Federman, "Imagination as Plagiarism [an unfinished paper . . .]" *New Literary History* 7. Spring, 1976, pp. 563-78.

4. Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964, pp. 36-44.

5. "Plagiarism - a symposium", *Times Literary Supplement*. April 9, 1982, 413-415.

performative utterance on the other.

I think that more of such an undertaking is needed, not just for literary theory, but also for rhetorical theory. We need to evaluate just what it is that we are doing when we make use of citation, when we borrow from others, when we attribute ideas to others, when we attribute ideas to ourselves, when we believe that our ideas are our own, when we believe that our ideas are the ideas of others. Plagiarism gets at all of this.

In the next section, I look at the kind of linguistic analyses that may shed light on the questions of plagiarism and originality. In the final section I suggest some strategies I have used to get students to see the plagiarism question in the light in which I am presenting it here.

0.3 Linguistic Cues

Suppose we accept the view that the problem of plagiarism is really the problem of finding a proper mix between the ideas of our ourselves and the ideas of those that have preceeded, and then to go on and credit sources as best we may.

We find that the linguistic devices available for carrying out this task are varied. Let me put some comparative perspective on this and then consider one device that I've been looking at, the use of *quotation*.

But as with my earlier comments concerning the variability in attitudes towards plagiarism, here also we have an array of devices universally for expressing quotation.

For example, an interesting accommodation to the words and ideas of the past is made in *wayang kulit* or Javanese shadow theatre. A.L Becker, after having apprenticed himself to a master puppeteer in this tradition, speaks of this theatre, as indeed he does all language activity, "as a variation between

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6. Derrida, Jacques. "LIMITED INC abo...". *Glyph 2*. Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University Press. 1977.

7. A.L. Becker, "Text Building, Epistemology, and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theatre." in A.L. Becker, Aram A. Yengoyan (ed.) *The Imagination of Reality. Essays in Southeast Asian Coherence Systems* Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ 1979, pp. 211-243.

spontaneity (present) and repetition (past) [215]"[7]

In wayang, the (oral) text is littered with different languages, each serving quite efficiently to signal that the ideas and words are of an earlier time. These languages include Old Javanese, pre-Hindu incantation, Arabic, words showing colonial influences, present Bahasa Indonesian, and apparently for some of the juicier parts, American English [232].

A similar strategy for noting reference is found among Jewish texts by the interspersing of Hebrew and Aramaic.

Thus consider the Gemara, written down about AD 200-500, a commentary on Mishnah, the codification of oral law. Quotation from Mishnah is evident by the language used. In the originals, normally , though not always, the sayings attributed to the Tannaim - a group of first and second century A.D. authorities [the Aramaic *tny* means 'repeaters'] - and statements of normative law will be in Hebrew. The comments and analyses of the Amoraim - a group of authorities who wrote after the death of Rabbi Judah, the compiler of the Mishnah - and stories will be in Aramaic. And the editors' own remarks will be in Aramaic. For a discussion see Jacob Neusner's *Invitation to Talmud*.[8]

Within the English tradition we also see that the way in which matters get quoted varies across time and literary conventions. Thus, Lakoff[9] discusses the way in which in Shakespeare we have basically two modes of discourse: metrical lines and simple prose paragraphs. The metrical lines are spoken by 'noble' characters, the commoners speak prose. This is a convention that Shakespeare uses. Presumably the nobility did not in real life speak in meter. [243]

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8. Neusner, Jacob. *Invitation to the Talmud*. New York: Harper & Row. 1973, p.119.

9. Robin Tolmach Lakoff, "Some of My Favorite Writes are Literate: The Mingling of Oral and Literate STrategies in Written Communication." in Deborah Tannen(ed.) *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*. Volume IX. Advances in Discourse Processes. Roy Freedle, series ed. Ablex Publishing. Norwood, NJ 1982.

0.3.1 Quotation and the Progressive

When I say that I am interested in quotation, that should not be taken to mean that I am interested in a series of normative, stipulative rules. I'm interested rather in when one would take it as reasonable that quotation should be used.

For example, first let us consider whether the fact that someone has uttered a particular sentence is occasion for quotation. Consider John, who utters the following:

John: It will rain tomorrow.

It of course would be quite acceptable to say indirectly:

John said that it will rain tomorrow

Here indirect quotation with unmemorable words is acceptable. In fact, it will sound or look strange to directly quote something whose words are not suitably memorable, or whose ideas are not suitably original.

It sounds strange to say

*John said, "It will rain tomorrow."

What is needed for an acceptable quotation is that the words as well as the ideas used be suitably memorable. Note that in this example I have placed a star by the sentence. The star should be taken to mean 'rhetorically unacceptable' and not 'ungrammatical' or any other more narrow characterization of form or meaning.

Of course one could cook up situations where the above sentence was acceptable. e.g. in discussion of the phonetic or phatic act of uttering "It will rain tomorrow." However, as a full blown speech act warning of impending precipitation, the above is inappropriate.

One quotes that which is suitably memorable.

A second question could be asked. Are quotation marks sufficient to establish that something truly is a quotation? Here, I am not concerned about those special quotation marks that students and advertisers use to draw attention to a word. *It was a "wild" party on Bourbon Street last night.*

That is, in certain circumstances it may be clear that even though we use quotation marks we do not mean to suggest that the words are truly quoted. This is common when the verb of citation is in the progressive:

President Reagan is saying the following: "I don't see matters this way. This is truly a matter of reconciliation, and reconciliation only."

Note Reagan did not use these words. Note also that the words must be in quotations or otherwise the first person pronoun would be unacceptable. However, if it is clear that he did not use these words then there is no objection to the use of quotation marks. Present progressive with quotation is then often used not to record speech, but to do precisely what we think of quotation as not doing: impose an understanding, a proper elaboration of the way things should be looked at and interpreted. Consider also a sentence such as the following:

These people are saying: "We demand our freedom."

These people are saying: "Give us liberty or give us death."

Here we have a first person form and yet there is no suggestion that these words were in actuality uttered.

I think that a linguistic analysis of citational language is necessary for us to get a hold on what is going on when we use the words of others.

Thus, we decide on whether something is directly quotable depending on whether it is suitably memorable. We must then teach our students what it means to be suitably memorable. i.e. we quote things that are worthy of being attributed to an author, or that are reasonable to attribute to authors, independently of whether they are attributed or not.

And the interesting question is what precisely is worthy or memorable in this way?

0.3.2 Non-simple nature of Author

I think that it is important for Rhetoric that the distribution and interpretation of quotation marks and citational language be at least described, and also that it be explained within a suitable linguistic theory.

Let me mention two places where I see the beginnings of a theory that might get at such questions.

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10. James D. McCawley. "Speech Acts and Goffman's participant roles" presented at Eastern States Conference on Linguistics, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, September 29, 1984

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Recent, James McCawley drawing on the work of Goffman has attempted to clarify ways in which the notions of speaker and hearer are really cover terms for a series of more basic roles that people satisfy in discourse, among these the roles of principal, author, and animator.

The animator is "the individual active in the role of utterance production", the author is the "someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" and the principle is the "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say."

Though in simple communication these three roles often converge, there is no necessity that they converge. Thus, suppose that Reagan delivers a ghost written speech. The principle and animator will diverge from the author.

We can look at the rhetoric of direct and indirect quotation in terms of these divisions.

To give just one example of the complex sorts of interactions here, imagine a case (discussed by McCawley) in which Edwin Meese is acting as spokesperson for Ronald Reagan, presenting Reagan's pronouncements on tax increases. That is, he is an animator of Reagan. The verb *say* plus indirect quotation is quite unacceptable:

*Meese said that there would be no tax increase.

Such a sentence could not show up, for example, in a magazine report of the press conference.

When Reagan is the principal, it is additionally unacceptable to use the verb *say* plus direct quotation as in

*When Reagan said, "There will be no tax increase everybody started crying."

At least the above is unacceptable with principal as grammatical subject when used as a report of the event in which the animator produced the words.

I'm hopeful that this sort of descriptive framework will eventually lead to a clearer characterization of what it means to attribute to a person responsibility for a text, and hence what the conditions are for plagiarism.

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11. Erving Goffman. 1981. Forms of talk. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

I won't have time to go into this in any detail here. Suffice it to say that I've spent my time trying to sort out sentences in which various roles are played by speakers of one sort of another, and various verbs of citation are substituted to express varying attitudes towards those citations:

?? In a speech delivered last night in his absence by close friend and confidant Fido Dog, Morris Cat barked/meowed/amusedly enough meowed out/ ,"More food for my friends please."

Once we make sense of the linguistics of direct and indirect quotation in terms proposed by Goffman or McCawley, I believe that the next systematic place to look for the manner in which we come to report the thoughts of others may come from a look at what has sometimes been called *logophoricity*.

There are many languages that get by perfectly well without quotation, but presumably none that could get by without in some sense distinguishing original from borrowed speech.

In many of the worlds languages there exists a peculiar sort of pronoun, sometimes called a logophoric pronoun, that is used to refer to the one "whose speech , thoughts , feelings, or general state of consciousness are being reported." Nick Clements first discussed such pronouns with regard to Ewe in 1975.[12] . More recently, the same sort of phenomenon has been shown to surface in wildly disparate languages, among them Icelandic and Japanese.[13]

Interestingly, the notion of logophoricity, much like the notion of 'speaker' or of 'the one who is responsible for an utterance' has proven not to be singular; rather, Sells has argued that it may be divided into more primitive roles in discourse, among them the SELF, i.e. the one whose mind is being reported, PIVOT, the one from whose point-of-view the report is made, and SOURCE, ' the one who makes the report'.

I do believe, or at least hope, or at least am willing to work on, the hope that these lines of research may someday converge leading to a characterization of the means by which we refer to

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12. Clements, George N. (1975). The Logophoric Pronoun in Ewe: Its Role in Discourse. in *Journal of West African Languages 2*, 141-177

13. Peter Sells, "On the Nature of Logophoricity" to appear in A Zaenen(ed.), *Studies in Grammatical Theory and Discourse Structure, Volume II: Logophoricity and Bound Anaphora*, CSLI, Stanford

the form and content of others' remarks, and the ways in which we code that form and content into our own discourse.

0.4 Student Exercises

Well, does my theory or my search for theory inform my practice? Not terribly much at this point. I have, in my first term writing class attempted to construct various exercises and journal entries that I believe get at the questions of originality, authorship, responsibility for ideas etc.

To understand the plagiarism question, I believe that the student must have a feeling for who they are, what makes them unique, what makes them the same as others. I don't believe my students have such a feeling.

So, what I assume is that when talking of rhetorical situations, my students have no selves they wish to project. I thus start them out in what look like explicitly plagiarizing situations. For example, they are to write as ghost writer for Ronald Reagan to various constituencies, unemployed steelworkers, TWA flight crews etc. They get a feeling for the words of others, and don't concern themselves with themselves until later on.

Gary Sloan, at Louisiana Tech University, has used such a technique for his high school students, demanding "unmitigated insincerity" of his students in initial papers, and only towards the end of the course allowing students to write in their own voice with their own beliefs. The suggestion was, I believe, that it was not possible for them to write themselves until that late point in the course.[14]

At points along the way in the course, we have informal discussions about what it means to identify with the words or ideas of others. I ask them to bring in examples of T-shirts they have, the kind with a message on them. We then discuss how when a person wears this shirt they are explicitly saying, "I choose to identify with what this person has said. I take their words as my own."

What we have in the course is a reverse movement from others and the world external to our students back to our students - who

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14. Gary Sloan, "Why I Wanted My Students to Lose Their Voices," *English Journal* 72.4, April 1982, pp. 31-33

they are. By the end of the course, without explicit training on the matter, they should have a feeling for what the plagiarism question amounts to.

Later assignments force them to confront their own ideas by looking at those ideas from a reversed rhetorical perspective. Thus, in their journals they may have to write a letter to an imaginary government Fund, very imaginary these days, offering scholarships for college. But in their graded paper, they must write a brochure from the perspective of the officers of that fund, detailing concerns for writing the scholarship essay.

The words that they use in the brochure are influenced by and influence the words that they use in their journal entry, and they hopefully come to have a feeling for the complex ways in which one's own ideas fit in with and hook up with the ideas of the society.

After a student writes a paper, I also have them put an entry into their journals which I title the *Fund for Thoughtful Ideas*. All it is is a pie graph in which they attribute some value to their paper, monetary if they wish, and then divide up that pie in terms of those that have made a contribution to it. Hopefully they start getting an idea about where their ideas are coming from, how much of the ideas in the paper they wish to feel responsible for, how much they would just as well hand over to someone else.

The pie graph suggestion is not all that different from a suggestion made by Joyce Armstrong Caroll in a 1982 article in the *English Journal*. She proposes that her students attach a "Personnoting page" to their papers in order to give[15] acknowledgments where due.

Let me mention one final assignment I give them that I think forces them to confront the questions of plagiarism, of originality, of borrowing etc. We write a paper detailing how two preachers, one from Revolutionary War times, one from Civil War times, draw analogies back to the Exodus theme. To make sense of the assignment students end up using language and ideas from four quite distinct periods: Biblical times, Revolutionary War times, Civil War times and their own time. While they are writing the assignment they are also writing journal entries in which among other things, they must try to write as that Revolutionary War preacher, try to write as a modern user or preacher of that Exodus theme, say in South Africa. They do well on all this. They start getting a feeling for which of the ideas

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15. Joyce Armstrong Carroll, "Plagiarism: The Unfun Game" *English Journal*, 71.5, Sept. a982, pp. 92-94

are their own, which are borrowed, where they are borrowed from, why one might wish to borrow, why one might wish to say when they are borrowing. They get a feeling, I hope, for plagiarism and for it's flip side of originality.

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Shirley Brice Heath has recently written on ways in which we can get students to be ethnographers of their own language, empowering those students by having the students themselves become the ones who find the problems with their language and the ones who reach an accommodation with the structures of the language.

I would like to get my students to make such observations concerning plagiarism and originality within the discourse communities of which they are a part and to reach some sort of accommodation with the words and ideas of themselves and of others. I want them to see the plagiarism question.

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16. Shirley Brice Heath. *Ways with Words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

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